

In 1888, the town voted to have the selectmen go before the County Commissioners with a request of the Gurnet Bridge Co., formed by William Wright. Authorization for the building of a bridge from Powder Point to Salter's Beach, so called, was given by Chapter 301 of the Acts of 1887. It was decided to build provided it did not cost the town more than \$10,000, but two thirds of the estimated cost of the town which was to be the town's share came to \$25,000. Then, on Nov. 20, 1889, another special meeting was held to see if the town really wanted the bridge. William Wright agreed to pay \$15,000 of the town's share, the County agreed to pay the other \$12,500 and the town voted to pay \$10,000. The whole matter was a bit more complicated, but it seemed to resolve itself nicely. The bridge was built in 1892 and dedicated in 1895.



Photo of an original painting of Powder Point Bridge by the late Bobbie Cutler.

It was originally 2,200 feet long, but 2 or 3 sections were removed following the storm of November 1898 when the crest of the beach was moved inland. At this time the Wright family owned the beach from the Hummock to the Plymouth line and had great plans for developing it as a summer resort. I once had a plan of their lot and road layout which I gave to the Beach Assn. Three houses were built on the beach soon after the bridge was completed. One was at High Pines, the others were side by side just South of the "half way house," the little shelter where the Coast Guard Patrol from Brant Rock met the patrol from The Gurnet. All 3 of these houses were floated across the bay on barges some 30 years ago and are now on Landing Rd. I have seen pictures of the beach following the big storm in 1889. I believe this storm was much worse than that of 1898, but no Portland was lost and it did not get publicity. One picture showed the beach where the bridge now ends to be about a third of a mile wide and under water at high tide. The dunes built up rapidly and before the gale of 1898 were higher than they have been since.

Following this 1898 storm any idea of further development on the beach was given up by Wright. There was another big storm about 1905 and there have been lesser ones from time to time every few years. Each storm seems to bring the crest of the beach nearer the mainland, and there is evidence of salt marsh turf on the ocean side that perhaps a hundred years ago was green with grass on the bay side. Some geologists think a few thousand years ago the beach followed the line of rock ledges that run North from the "Thumb Nails" by High Pine Ledge and on to Minot's Ledge. From when I was about 8 to perhaps 12 or 13, a friend and I made an annual trip to The Gurnet at some time during the summer. At about high water mark on the East side was a large rectangular rock about 4 feet square on top and sticking up perhaps 8 feet. Each time we planned to eat our lunch on this rock. The last time I was at The Gurnet the rock was about 300 feet East of the bluff and covered at half tide. When Wright built the 2 houses near the half way house a large cistern for storage of rain water was built 30 feet West of the houses and 300 feet from the crest of the beach.

After the 1898 storm these 2 houses were moved back to the West. They were moved twice more that I remember, and in 1915 half the cistern was exposed like a big wasp's nest on the side of a high dune. Following the next storm the cistern collapsed. All of which would indicate that the whole beach had moved to the West at least 300 feet during the last 50 years. One of the curious results of this movement has been its effect on various parcels of land situated North of the bridge. Some of these are laid out and described from points on Canal River; others have their descriptions based on points given as being on the crest of the beach.

With the Westerly movement of the beach one will sometimes find that 2 persons will each claim title to the same parcel of land, the Easterly one having slid back. In many ways I have always been fascinated by the "Big Marsh" North of the bridge. I can remember a draw in the bridge over Cut River in Marshfield, faint traces of the remains of Bowen's Wharf, the dugway behind the Island Meadow (dug so Wright's 2 steam yachts could be moored in the hole East of Fire Island, because they were too long to make the bend in the Back River on the Island Meadow.) I have seen pictures of the yachts, the dugway and the mooring. I also remember a large, very old hollow apple tree at the Westerly end of Saquish which I was told was used by people from Kingston and Duxbury to deposit mail which was picked up by the Boston-Plymouth boat on its way back to Boston. Cut River is now well filled in, though I have taken a boat through to the Dyke Road at Brant Rock. The dugway is filled to a point where it is now only a foot or 2 below the level of surrounding marsh though its straight line indicates the work of man. But taken all together one can easily picture the Boston Packet boat coming through Cut River to Bowen's Wharf loaded with members of the Massachusetts Legislature on their way to Daniel Webster's funeral, or that same packet boat loaded with supplies for Ford's Store on Tremont St.